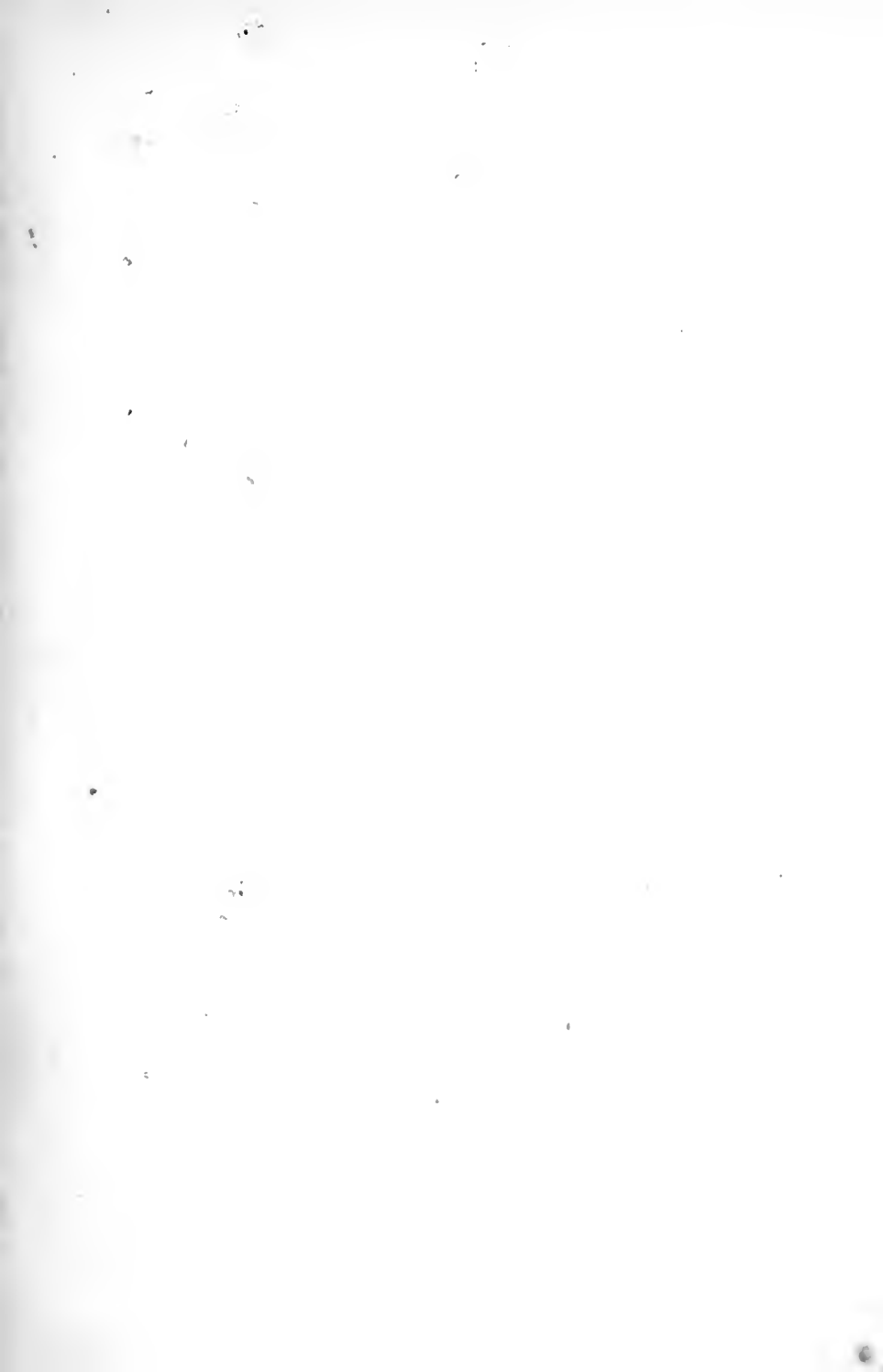


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The Autumn Garden

By the same Author

ON VIOL AND FLUTE. 1873

KING ERIK. 1876

NEW POEMS. 1879

FIRDAUSI IN EXILE. 1885

IN RUSSET AND SILVER. 1894

HYPOLYMPIA. 1901

The Autumn Garden

By
Edmund Gosse

London
William Heinemann
1909

ABSTRACT
OF
THE
LAW
OF
THE
STATE

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To
James Fitzmaurice-Kelly

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Proem

Proem

PALE thoughts, like drops of trembling dew,
By sunset of my hopes shot through ;
Faint longings, colourless at noon,
But turned to beryls in the moon ;

Ecstatic dreams ; obscure desires,
Lit up by misty opal-fires ;
Intensest visions, caught between
The flight of phantoms scarcely seen ;

Within this featureless array
Of year by year and day by day,
I fix them, flashing, ere they pass,
And turn them into gems—or glass !

I string them, be they stone or paste,
I string them ere they fall to waste,
And in my fond delusion fling
The circlet o'er Time's hurrying wing.

Ah ! they may hang a moment there,
Caught by a feather, high in air,—
Or they may flit to earth amain
Dissolved in tears of silver rain.

Lyrics in the Mood of Reflection



The Intellectual Ecstasy

“Hinc Stygias ebrius hausit aquas”

DIOGENES LAERTIUS

OF Epicurus it is told
That growing weak, and faint, and cold,
And falling towards that torpid state
By doctors held as desperate,
He drowned his senses in a flood
Of th' ancient vine's ebullient blood,
Ingurgitating draughts of fire
To lull his fear and his desire.

But was he sober when he died?—
Whereto an epigram replied :
“He was too mad to taste or care
How bitter Stygian waters were;
Blest was he therefore.” Can we draw
A sweetness from this cynic saw,
Or of this mithridate distil
An antidote for life's long ill?

Perchance! since, as we linger thus,
'Twixt dawn and dark swung pendulous,
Supported through our irksome state
By fond illusions of old date,

The mind within itself retires,
And there inspects its dead desires—
A soothsayer, revolving thrice
Around the ambiguous sacrifice.

In vain we toil to waken flame
Where once with scarce a breath it came ;
In vain old auguries invoke
Of swarming bees and stricken oak ;
The spirit feels no secret stir
O' the exquisite remembrancer,
And into depths, unsealed in vain,
Drop hollow-sounding tears like rain.

But still, in philosophic sense,
A purple cluster glows intense,
And from an intellectual vine
Rich madness gushes, half divine ;
Droops the dull vein in chill eclipse ?
A heavenly beaker slakes our lips,
And cups of thrilling freshness lend
Fantastic aid as we descend.

So, drunk with knowledge, only fed
With rapture from the fountain-head,
Until the bells of God shall call
The flush'd, insatiate bacchanal,
Let her go smiling toward her rest
On tottering footsteps, faintly blest,
And, in that fair delirium dight,
Walk down to darkness in great light.

A London Fog

IN blue-gray fog, as in the sea, we drown ;
The unseen rain soaks down ;
Like broken phantom pillars, from each roof
The chimneys soar aloof.

The sky, lost, like some ocean from below,
Melts in one general flow ;
Vague, dull, immense, splashed with the light of tears,
The long dim pavement sheers.

And now, and now, across its sullied glass,
The blotted figures pass ;—
Hope, poverty, ambition, lust, and pain
Glide, muffled, thro' the rain.

And she whom most we love, or that fell head
Our thoughts hate most, and dread,
Might cleave the blueness at our cheek, nor make
One sentry-nerve awake.

This is an image of indifferent death,
That chokes the ardent breath,
Bids the warm eye be veiled, the heart beat slow,
The tide of self slip low ;

And with its universal chill prepares
This creature of bright airs
For faint eternal grades of misty blue,
And mazes without clue.

Sursum

THE Alpine pasture stirs
With rattling grasshoppers,
Some green, some gold, some gray with crimson wings ;
Antic or grim or fair,
They glitter everywhere,
Without a path or aim, brisk foolish blundering things.

On stiff legs issuing forth,
They fling to greet the North,
But veer by South in air, and perch by West ;
Nor o'er those horny eyes
Floats shadow of surprise
To find the impelling hope so instantly repressed.

Thus, with no goal or plan,
The headlong race of man
Bounds in the void at each uncertain sign,
Take grass-flowers for the stars,
Ants' holes for hell's black bars,
The lustrous eyes of mice for Providence Divine.

Yet, with a knotted scourge,
The instinctive forces urge
Their helpless slaves to leap in hollow air ;

No matter what the flight,
Nor where the feet alight,
To leap and pause and leap is all our human care.

Nor at this fate would I,
Shrill insect, wail and cry,
Demand a goal, and shake the stems with rage,
Claim that our fretful race
Should know their hour and place,
Should whirr with faultless aim across their grassy stage.

Rather for spurs that prick
My dulness to the quick,
Whither I know not, forcing upward flight—
For blind desires to rise
Toward blank phantasmal skies,
To vault in fruitless curve beneath a larger light,—

For instincts vague and wide—
So humbling to my pride—
I thank the Will I own not, yet adore ;
Content to leap astray,
Content to lose my way,
While still I hold in joy the mastering wish to soar.

The Bust

*My daughters, on my birthday-dawn,
Deep midst our London garden-trees,
Set up the image of a Faun,
All garlanded and tricked to please.*

Against the door's dark cinnabar
The white bust twinkles, like a star,
High on its slender pedestal :
The heavy chestnuts, green and brown,
Throw verdurous lights and shadows down,
While birds about it flit and fall.
The serpent-locks bear stain on stain
From loose crushed leaf and sudden storm ;
Within the laughing eyes, the rain
Has channelled out the dainty form.

In Greece 'twas marble long ago,
Pentelican, as pure as snow
And crystalline as mountain frost,
But here, in London, sculpture's breath
Pants to a plaster-cloudy death,
Till all the lovelier gleam is lost.

Yet fondly, from my trellised bower,
I gaze, this magic twilight hour,
Upon the Faun that smiles, and smiles,
And mystifies, and still beguiles.

His curling lips are reft apart
With folds of that grimacing stain
Which now exaggerates the art
That modelled, with a drift of rain ;
I see him as he lived in Greece ;
I see the pipes, the humble fleece,
The fillet and the bunch of nuts,
The little gifts which shepherds laid
Upon the wild thyme in the glade
That sloped down softly towards their huts ;
Ambiguous apparition, made
To tell their terror and their trade !

O Faun, within the folding night
Thou fadest to a star of white ;
Thy lidded eyes, thy serpent-hair,
Thy twisted throat of mystery,
Thy narrow brows unscored by care,
I still divine, yet hardly see.
Instead of purple Attic wine,
Satyric ghost, I pour to thee
Pure water, flung out far and fine,
In drops that pierce the night, and shine.
O Faun, be bountiful to me !

O bless my hearth and home, as when,
Outspeeded by the Maenades,
Thou paused'st near the haunts of men,
To bless the fishers of the seas ;
Or leaning to the reddened rocks
To watch the fleecy, loitering flocks
Of shepherds in the darkling glen ;
Or bending with illusive smile
To see the rustic troop defile,
And lights spring out at eve as now ;
Then on thy goat-feet sped'st amain
To join the timbrel-whirling train
Of nymphs upon the mountain's brow.

O bless my empty ears with song,
Since thou hast flung from laughing lips
The reedy pipes that did them wrong,
That thy mouth's music might eclipse
All pastoral fluting ! In this heart,—
This old, weak, weary heart of mine,—
An ancient spirit stands apart
And listens for a sound from thine.
Sing, Faun, of all the opening world,
So delicate, so dewy-pearled,
That budded round thy daring eyes,
When first amid the strain and stir
Of many a fragrant, whispering fir
Thou gazed'st with a babe's surprise,
And from thy russet-needed bed,
Down the long avenue of pines,

Saw'st the slow sunrise ridge with red
The dim white Ocean's long-drawn lines.

O speak, eternal lips of youth,
Some word to age that flags so fast !
Hast thou no tenderness, no ruth
For wingèd years that flutter past ?
Immortal Faun, tho' cold thou art,
In thy unaltered smile I read
A presage to my smouldering heart
That can but leap to thee, and bleed.
O guide it through this darker day,
When all has sunk to cloud and clay,
When even thine own immortal form
Has lost the marble of its birth,
And shadows of the final storm
Close over this dejected earth !

O lift me, cold sardonic Bust,
Above the silence and the dust ;
Teach me thine old, sublime, severe
Philosophy of light and love,
Bid me be calm, as leaves are green,
And humble, as the stars above.

*Stars ? They are salt around my head,
And brushed by leaves like quivering hands.
The ancient goatherd, that was dead,
Lives, and condones, and understands.*

Sir Lamourac

THE day was curs'd, the day was black,
When 'that bright knight, Sir Lamourac,
Brought Mark the fatal faery horn
Which proved Sir Tristram's faith forsworn ;
When, to the chapel near the sea,
Sir Tristram, bound at wrist and knee,
Was roughly haled by forty knights :
This was the end of love's delights,
And all the sorrows of the world
From that dark trumpet were unfurled.
No more the happy sparkling wold
Would gleam at daybreak like wet gold ;
No more the wave of fishes break
In silver on the low moon's wake ;
No more the slim brown nightingale,
Against the twilight primrose-pale,
Make Tristram's heart leap hard with bliss.
The beauty of the world must miss
Some glamour of the soul of a boy,
Some rapture of unbidden joy ;
And it was Lamourac,—and not
Another with blind passion hot,—

The pure cold spirit of Lamourac,
For ever strained upon the rack
And stabbed by pangs of knightliness,
That did this deed of cruel stress.

Ah ! life is thrid with paths like these,
That lead to sorrow and to disease
From spirit-heights of lifted bliss !
The lover to the loved it is
Who serves the bitter bowl of hate ;
The cheerful hand is the hand of fate.
An innocent child will spread the gin,
A priest in prayer lead straight to sin ;
The climber, blind in her own hair,
The pitiful missioner of despair,
The wind that bloweth the smoking flax,—
To Tristrams all are Lamouracs.

A Night in Time of War

THE clouds are up, to sweep and tune
That inharmonious harp, the moon ;
The north wind blows a harsh bassoon.

An old astrologer might say,
By signs, by portents whirled this way,
That earth was nearing her decay.

All apprehensions stir to-night
With fluttering issues infinite,
Conjunction, phantom, famine, blight ;

The woodland shakes its agèd bones
And shrieks ; beyond, in deeper tones
The ceremonial cypress groans ;

And I, the microcosm of all,
Quake, shuddering, underneath the pall
Of nature's hurrying funeral.

Yes ! though my sceptic brain rejects
My sires' chain'd causes and effects,
The nerves retain their deep defects ;

And still my heart leaps in my side,—
A fluctuant ark upon its tide,—
With throbs and throes unsanctified,

And knows not how to brave the stir
Of sounds that beckon and shout to her
Of sins that clouds and winds aver.

I dare not sleep to-night, for dread
Of spectral lights obscurely shed
About my plum'd and shadowy bed.

Faint, faint, these mildew'd chords that twang
So feebly, where the music rang
Deep organ-notes when Homer sang !

Ah ! strange to find the quivering crests
Of long-laid faiths, forgotten guests,
Rise up at memory's dim behests !

Ah ! strange to feel the soul resume
Its cast-off heritage of gloom,—
The savage turning in his tomb !

June

AH ! why my heart is beating is more than I can tell,
At the hawthorn-bloom like incense in the air,
And the cuckoo in the woodland that is calling like a bell,
Like a cracked bell calling me to prayer ;

But I think the ringing cuckoo, with its hard hysteric cry,
Is youth in the spring-movement of the blood,
And the richness of the blossom a reminder we must die,
While life is tasting exquisitely good.

Ah ! the falling of the petals in the shivering silver night !
Ah ! the turning wheel of years that will not stay !
I'd relinquish all the chances of to-morrows bold and bright
For one clutch at the delirium of to-day.

Abishag

O LITTLE tender rose of Bethlehem,
Lo ! I am harsher than the salt sea-shore,
And purblind, like some beggar of the plain,
With knotted hair, and beard that hath not known
The comb's caress for wandering wasted years.

I know thy fingers are too fresh and cool
To lie within my gnarled and leathern hands ;
I know thy kiss drops on my mouth like dew
On dust, or like those petals of the peach
Starring the ruined road to Olivet.

But I have left the pilgrims in the path
To wrangle round their creeds with shaken staves,
And I have left the thought that I am old,
For, gazing in the pools of thy dark eyes,
The mirrored portrait of myself seems young.

Monad and Multitude

DEEP in high woods, where none pass by,
Strange fancies haunt the ear and eye,
And human forms are inly seen
Where human foot hath seldom been :
So, to my restless thought to-day,
Grows populous the woodland gray—
Young, stalwart, silent warriors these
Battalions of beleaguering trees ;
Each living bole, awakened, lifts
Toward golden cloud and azure rifts
Slim, slippery limbs, but lately curl'd
In coverts of the savage world,
Each naked, with its silver guard,
Soft skin, and muscle folded hard.

So dreamed I, with that army round
Of forms alert, and—ne'er a sound.

Then as I lay across the bed
Of cold moss temper'd to my head,
I sang : " O million shafts of pines,
On each of whom the god-light shines,
In you the miracle I see

Of multitude in unity.
Each silken pillar stands alone ;
From root to quivering twig 'tis one ;
Its body drawn from earth's gray lap,
Its branches fed with gem-like sap ;
Through dreamy frosts, submerged in snow,
Which spreads a twilight here below,—
Through summer opened fanlike out,
By flame of spice made smooth and stout,—
Each watched and fed and bound and guarded
As if alone of all regarded,
Yet standing in this forest fast
An atom in the tree-world vast,
One of a million—swarms that are
Mere velvet from the vale afar,
Uncounted items covering wide
The old heroic mountain-side,
Mere units from whose sacrifice
Broad complicated forests rise.”

So, in the mystic world of man,
We see the endless double plan—
The single spirit, for whose boon
Alone God lighted sun and moon,
You, or you other soul, or I,
The central wonder of the sky,
A solitary force that came
From heaven, and holds the heavenly flame ;
Whose life alone contains the fears
And joys of time's unending years ;
Fixed goal round which for ever stirs

The ministering universe,
Whose mighty sinew, whose clear nerve,
Whose pulse and satin skin, deserve
The best that eons can supply
Of vivid immortality.

So, gaze at the sufficing pine
For one view of your being, and mine !
But, in another view, how slight
Your hold and mine on love and light !

Items we are, of no account,
As pushing toward the sun we mount,
And 'tis but in our own conceit
We feign a godhead round our feet.
Since,—this one stunted, that one tall,
And boughs here mildewed, fit to fall,
This soiled from owls' nests, this one clean,
With shimmering fans of stainless green—
We are but parts of one design,
Monotonous and unbenign.

Last night along this huge expanse
I saw a crookèd lightning dance ;
The thunder roared in hollow fit,
And all the forest moaned with it.
If from the vault in darkness steeped
A shaft of angry lightning leaped,
And tipped one pine in elfin mirth,
And scored and blasted it to earth,

Fed on its spices, burned within,
And shrivelled up its satin skin,
Where is that stricken pine to-day,
In all the forests' plumed array ?

What tho' the single life be broken,
The broad, sweet woodland gives no token ;
Its oneness left no wounded sense
On the undisturbed circumference,
Nor can the eye, though searching well,
Deplore that vanished miracle.

Such is the wonder of man's soul,
God-guarded, an essential whole ;
Yet, in life's broad and mighty scheme,
God-unregarded, and a dream.

The Train of Life

WE traced the bleak ridge, to and fro,
Grave forty, gay fourteen ;
While yellow larks, in heaven's blue glow,
Like laughing stars were seen,
And rose-tipp'd larches, fringed below,
Shone fabulously green.

And as I watched my restless son
Leap over gorse and briar,
And felt his golden nature run
With April sap and fire,
Methought another madpate spun
Beside another sire.

Sudden, the thirty years slip by,
Shot like a curtain's rings !
My father treads the ridge, and I
The boy that leaps and flings,
While eyes that in the churchyard lie
Seem smiling tenderest things.

At a Casino

THE night was scented like a peach,
The balustrade was cold to touch ;
The words that linked us, each to each,
Expressed too little,—or too much !
The music sobbed beneath the trees
That soared into a purple sky ;
On nights so delicate as these
We dare not dream that we must die.

The breeze came scented o'er the vines
Down limestone mountains ghostly pale ;
What boundless hopes the heart confines !
And hopes should never faint nor fail.
The plaintive string, the wailing brass
Struck up a livelier note of glee ;
But moods, like clouds at midnight, pass—
And who so sorrowful as we ?

The laurels flashed their silver tongues
Within the perfumed moonlit night ;
Our pulses overflowed with songs
Of life's ineffable delight,—

Then ebb'd with fear of growing old,
With nameless dread, with shadowy care ;
The balustrade was marble-cold,
And like a peach the wandering air.

Joy

I HAVE seen, I too, the April face of joy,
The pale wet blue, the flying yellow cloud ;
I have felt the wind across the mountain-side,
Cold after hail, and in the primrose dell
The sunlight warmer than a mother's hands.

O to embrace the trembling lips of joy !
O to catch sight, deep in the shivering grass,
Of golden, snow-white, lilac blooms of Spring,
Ghosts from the underworld miraculous,
Saints rearisen from sordid clods of sin.

But what is joy, and what are flowers and clouds,
And what the diapason of the birds,
And what the holiness and bliss of thought,
Unless another shares them ? Magic gold
That fades while greedy fingers clutch at it.

Pure would I be, and yet not cold nor thin,
Uplifted in the dream of lovely life
Renascent, yet nor arrogant nor dense,
But like a mirror to reflect the sky
On pensive hearts shut up in silentness.

Ah ! how to flash the marvel back on these !
Ah ! how to carry in my shining eyes
The April azure, in my tingling hands
The new-born sun-warmth, how to pour them forth
Into cold breasts that languish in the gloom ?

Since, while the glory floods me, it is gone !
Gray grow the skies, doleful the dripping boughs ;
My eyes and hands are empty as before ;
Of all the promised benefactions, hope
And memory, faded memory, sole survive.

Ah ! seize the rapturous moment, bind the charm !
Let love run faster than the halcyon gleam
That sanctified these waters and this glade !
Let me be fleet in tenderness, and swift
In kindest answer to the impulse given.

So, and not otherwise, the blue may shine
In mortal eyes, while all the heavens grow dull ;
So, and not otherwise, the breath of balm
Be wafted thro' the dolorous hurricane,
And joy persist through all vicissitude.

Dunster Mill

HERE would I live, and watch the light
Ebb down my level lawns at night,
While Avill with his whispering stream
Should mould the music of my dream ;
My poplars old should flutter high
Their fairy hands against the sky,
And all the hollow twilight stir
With laughter of the woodpecker.
The hunt should, each a scarlet spark,
Press homeward down the dark-green park,
Yet scarcely wind the horn, or be
Disturbers of my privacy ;
Nor from the hollyhocks should scare
One mimic huntsman of the air.
All sounds and scents, all shadowy lights,
That life revolves in careful rites,
Should, on this rustic altar piled,
Beguile me as they once beguiled.
The silvery otter then might spy
My limbs reclined, nor think to fly ;
The ousel preen her dazzling breast,
And lead me to her sunken nest ;

The wild hind pierce my noontide lair,
Nor start to find a harbourer there ;
The heavy-lidded owlet hoot
Her welcome from the pear-tree shoot :
All Nature graciously contend
To claim me for a harmless friend.

Ah ! dream enwrapped in wreathèd mist,
Come ! fold me in thine amethyst ;
Divide from all the jarring years
This heart that hopes and craves and fears ;
Still let me live, still take from thee
Thy gifts of stream and poplar-tree.

May Day

EACH month of May
The gardens have their way,
Suffusing pale pure light
Thro' foliage clean and bright,
Till suns destroy
The soft enigma of their emerald joy.

Their innocence,
Their paradisal sense,—
As of broad fans outspread
Over an angel's head
To hide the blue,
And catch the gliding constellated dew,—

Each year repeats.
Each year, with magic feats,
Renews the miracle
Of growth and hue and smell,
And, full in sight,
The verdant metamorphosis of light.

A Ballade of the Simple Life

ACROSS the blushing willow-weed in spires
Of fulgent crimson barred with opal grains,
Lit by the ardent sunset's liquid fires
While life seemed mantling in his rosy veins—
The life of life that waxes not nor wanes,—
Courage came first, a javelin in his hand ;
The light within his bold black eyes was fanned
By high disdain and ignorance of shame ;
And like a bastion then I saw him stand,
A wholesome wood-boy with his cheeks on flame.

Then, swiftly, thro' a noise of leaves like lyres,
Unclouded by the weary fret that stains
Our jaded limbs ; clean from all sick desires ;
Bright as the tossing eglantine that chains
With fairy pink the odorous winding lanes,
Foy leapt to sight ; his russet brow was tanned,
Where curls were clustered round, a laughing band ;
Beating a lifted tambourine he came,
And flung it flaring upward like a brand,—
A wholesome wood-boy with his cheeks on flame.

Then fell there silence on the adoring choirs
Of birds that celebrate their wedded pains ;

The brushwood backward waved the elastic wires
With which its matted undergrowth restrains
The striving foot which little purchase gains,—
And *Pity* glided towards me. Soft as sand
The fading twilight smouldered in the bland
Loose clusters of his hair. I read his name
By sudden shining tears, through which I scanned
The wholesome wood-boy with his cheeks on flame.

Envoi.

PRINCE, in the purer empire of our sires,
Threefold the Power that purchased health and fame!
Now the loose web of useless effort tires
Our foolish heart that in a coil expires;
O to regain that age when, void of blame,
Courage and *Joy* and *Pity* were our squires,—
Three wholesome wood-boys with their cheeks on flame.

The Butchers' Row

THEY wandered down the Butchers' Row
In old Limoges the fair ;
His love was dressed as white as snow
Under her ruddy hair ;
It fared to be St. Maura's fête,
And all the bells rang out,
And through the ruinous English gate
There streamed the merry rout.

The butchers' shops were black as night,
The flags were blue and red ;
His love walked on in laughing white,
Merry the word she said ;
And down the Row to the river-shore
She passed, so pure and gay,
The people took her for Ste. Maure,
And crossed themselves to pray.

Rosemary

GREEN bud-stars spangle
The dead, black tree ;
Bloom's in a tangle
On holt and lea :
Now elm-boughs shade me,
Now birds have sung,
O heart, persuade me
I still am young !

Ah, no ; heart, hush thee !
Be wise, serene,
Lest snow-wreaths crush thee
Ere Hallowe'en ;
Though June be jolly,
Though flowers be sweet,
'Tis naught but folly,
And fond deceit.

Heart, thou hast finished
With joys that fade ;
Thy strength diminished,
Thy light decayed !

The brain is an ember ;
The blood is cold—
O heart, remember
We both are old !

To a Portuguese Measure

IF all the stars that glitter
In heaven's high cope, should topple from their places,—
If all the fruits turned bitter
That soothe us with suave graces,
If all young girls bore sad and shrunken faces ;

If shivering months should bind us
In chains of darkness, forged of frozen Summer,
With dull dead Spring behind us,
And Autumn growing dumber,
And ice within the beard of each new-comer ;

Yet Memory the Beguiler
Would tune her rapid notes in brisk division,
And Fancy, roseate Smiler,
Would build up dreams elysian,
And warm the heart of man with joyful vision.

At Anstey's Cove

THE breeze inscribes with ring on ring
The grizzled oily seas of Spring ;
Around the headland, gray and pale,
Comes, like a ghost, a gliding sail.

Through brooding tides I see her come
Where once I rowed, where once I swum ;
Ah ! then that weltering water's hue
Was rainbow-purple, peacock-blue.

She veers and fades ; she dies away
In gulfs of universal gray ;
And of my boyhood and its boast
She seems the melancholy ghost.

Disillusion

IN the mirk that circles us
 Starry clear thy image stood,
Like the gold ranunculus
 On the black pools in the wood.

While its pure refulgence shone,
 Even despair grew thin and bright,
As behind the burning sun
 Darkest ether melts to white.

Now that image quits the sky,
 Plunges like a falling star,
Slips, out of the pride on high,
 Down, down where the pities are.

What an empty world for me !
 What a night without a sound !
Suddenly eternity
 With its blackness folds me round.

The Violet

BESIDE the dusty road of life,
Deflowered with toil and foul with strife,
Lie hid' within a charm of dew
Pure harbours made for me and you.

In such a shadowy nook is set
Rest's purple-wingèd violet ;
It nods upon the fitful breeze
Born in the fount's interstices ;—

That fount of joy for travellers made,
Ensconced within a dappled shade,
Where still its wings our violet lifts
Beneath the pulsing air that shifts ;—

The little fount that bubbles there
Under a veil of maiden-hair,
And coils through many a liquid fold
Its crystal waters dusk and cold.

So small the fount, a hidden thing,—
So weak the violet's throbbing wing,—
The haughty world in dust rides by,
Without a thought, without a sigh.

Loud, in a riot of speed and glare,
About their noisy work men fare ;
With shriek of engine, yell of horn,
They glorify a world new-born.

We love the old, the timid ways,
The loose bough shutting out the blaze,
The murmur of an ancient rhyme,
Heard faintly in the ear of Time.

And spirits, here and there, who still
Prefer the mill-stream to the mill,
To riot, quiet, and to speed
The dance of rooted water-weed,

Across a rood or two of grass,
Unseen, into our realm will pass,
Will lean above the whispering spring,
And hear the hidden runnel sing.

And then the crimson cheek will choose
The rainbow of the pulsing dews ;
Then silence calm the 'wilderer brain,
And life grow sanctified again.

A Mood in Italy

UNDER the fluted
Velvet datura's
Trumpets of perfume
 Virginal white,
Long I waited,
Leaning my elbows
Hard on the marble
 Over the lake,
Dreamily questioning
What was the mystery,
What was the secret
 Issue of life ?
Years pass over us,
Years glide by with us,—
Years like the sandalo
 Scoring the blue ;
Faint white wake of it,
Noiseless oars of it,
Woundless waters
 Melting behind.
What is the worth of it ?
What the meaning ?
What the issue
 When life is done ?

So, for ages,
The world has questioned,
So the philosopher,
 So the saint ;
Bells from the bell-tower
Pink through the chestnuts,
Song from the orchard,
 Prayer from the shrine.
Priest and peasant,
Lover and martyr,
Monk in his rock-cell,
 King on his throne,
Ever repeating,
Ever resuming,
Ever comparing,
 But all—in vain !
The sandalo passes ;
Their rich September
Fainting in perfume,—
 Their withering March,—
If it bless them or ban them,
Ripen or rot them,
Leaves them silent
 Without reply.

Frail and hurrying
Child of darkness,
Spun for a moment
 In sparkling blue,
With night behind me,
And night before me,

And blind as the sage is,
 And dark as the fool,—
Can I,—presuming,
Where all before me
Have failed, have fall'n
 By Sphinx devour'd,—
Can I in this moment
Garner a harvest
Where no man hath gathered
 One sheaf from time ?
Vain is the effort !
Better in silence
Breathe the datura's
 Ineffable breath,—
Take, in patience,
The delicate pleasure
That flowers and waters
 And clouds procure.

Nay, but a glimmer,
Faint as a sparkle
Caught from the mirror
 Of wind-touch'd wave,
Flashes within me,
Wakens a feeling
Scarce articulate,
 Finer than thought ;
Hints that the secret
Pulses of being
Aim at no wonder
 Beyond themselves ;

That light and odour,
Stillness and movement,
The bell that summons,
 But not the prayer,
Hope in its progress,
But not fruition,
The oar that impels us,
 But not the port,—
Life in living,
The urgent instinct,—
These are the intimate
 Issues of life !

Give me the wisdom
To glide, and gliding
Take the happiness,
 Take the pain ;
Know myself to be
Less than a petal
Floating in fragrance
 Down to the lake.
Weakness of mortals !
Impotent butterflies
Beat their tremulous
 Radiant vans,
Dream of morrows
Beyond to-morrow,
Probe for honey
 In honey-less blooms.
Moment by moment
Ah ! to be telling

Ever the pulses
 Of perilous time ;
This is your answer,
Martyr and lover,
This is the guerdon
 This the crown !

Sonnets

Ships on the Sea

FAR down the dim horizon of my soul
 White are the sails of friends beloved and lost ;
 Great ships that in mid-sea my pinnacle crost,
That hailed it cheerly o'er the long waves' roll.

All, all have reached their harbour and their goal ;
 I still ride out the storm-wind and the frost ;
 By futile hopes and wavering passions tost,
I miss their broader sway and strong control.

But not in vain beneath their lofty shade
 I danced awhile, frail plaything of the seas ;
 Unfit to brave the ampler main with these ;
Yet, by the instinct which their souls obeyed,
Less stedfast, o'er the trackless wave I strayed,
 And follow still their vanishing trestle-trees.

R. B.

His soul went singing like a mountaineer
Who climbs the hills, and carols as he climbs ;
Above the snows he heard the faëry chimes
Of God's faint bells, and felt no shade of fear.

He leaped in faith from year to glimmering year ;
Nothing to him seemed poor or vile or vain,
Since all the fibres of his heart and brain
Were braced by hope's high alpine atmosphere.

I have known no goodlier spirit ! Where he walked,
Love masqueraded in rough skins and claws,
Feigning to be some monster of the woods ;

Loud was the voice wherewith he rhymed and talked,
But warmer heart, or moved in kindlier cause,
Was never stirred by man's vicissitudes.

J. A. S.

THOU, who, in thine own bitter words, did'st keep
A burning heart amid the eternal snows,—
Say, whether in the garth of death there grows
A herb to staunch thy grief and yield thee sleep.

Breathe gentlier, gentlier there ! oh slumber deep !
No more the fangs of fruitless longing close
Fast in that flesh from which the life-blood flows,
Back from that brow the clouds of torture sweep.

Beyond the lot of man thou sufferedst pain ;
But thy great spirit, through the winnowing fire,
Like noblest metal from a raging pyre,

Ran, liquid light, a stream of sparkling rain,
Indomitably daring, gold of brain
Fused from the ore of torments gross and dire.

R. L. S.

REST, oh thou restless angel, rest at last,
 High on thy mountain peak that caps the waves ;
 Anguish no more thy delicate soul enslaves,
Dream-clouds no more thy slumber overcast.

Adventurous angel, fold thy wings ! the vast
 Pacific forest, with its architraves,
 The stillness of its long liana'd naves,
Involves thee in a silence of times past.

Thou whom we loved, a child of sportive whim,
 So fair to play with, comfort, thrill or chide,
 Art grown as ancient as thine island gods,

As mystic as the menacing seraphim,
 As grim as priests upon a red hill-side,
 Or lictors shouldering high their sheaves of rods.

The Votive Tree

SPRAWLED on the harsh sea-sand, Lentinus found
A rough wild olive, on whose branches grew
Strange foliage—wind-dried garments not a few,
Festoons of seaweed, battered medals bound

Like fruits, and tinkling with a shaken sound,—
Things ragged, mean, deplorable to view ;
But he was moved and gladdened, for he knew
The pious token and the prayer profound.

These were the gifts of sailors, who had felt
Death, in a dream, like cold wind thro' their hair,
And, wakening, found the horror ebbed away ;

So that beneath that tree Lentinus knelt,
As at a chapel entered unaware,
And blessed the gods whom storms and seas obey.

The Rhododendron

LOVE clasps his arms around the awakening bride,
Till from the sullen foliage of her heart
Passion and thought and hope impulsive start :
So April, down this rolling garden-side,

Wakes blossom on the rhododendron's crest,—
Volcanic crimson from a burning world,
Fire, buried and lost, in maiden foliage furled,
Now blazoned to the waters and the West.

For, all the smouldering embers of her soul
Lay hidden in glossy darkness with no sign,
Till Love, onrushing like a storm unseal'd,

Scatter'd the bud-sheaths, and the glowing coal,
In flames like petals, with a scent of wine,
Leapt furious, and the Woman smiled, reveal'd.

MOUNTSTEWART, *April* 14, 1906.

The Tyrant Dream

THIS living world seems dazed and submarine,
Drenched in the lunar splendour of the night,
And, like owls' golden eyes, are sparkling bright
Stars thro' the beechen boughs that intervene ;

And down this vitreous wilderness of green
Thy pale fantastic shade, O false delight,
Importunately challenges the flight
Of feebler fancies, cool and mild and mean.

Dream, I forbade thy presence here with me !
Hot shade, I drave thee from my paradise !
Delight, thou shouldst enslave my heart no more !

But, in this glassy night of reverie,
Thou hast rent the daylight artifice of lies !
Tyrannic dream, entrance me as before.

Melancholy in the Garden

I

THE winds that dash these August dahlias down,
And chase the streams of light across the grass,
This solemn watery air, like clouded glass,
This perfume on the terrace bare and brown,

Are like the soundless flush of full renown
That gathers with the gathering years that pass,
And weaves for happy, glorious life, alas !
Of sorrow and of solitude a crown.

I know not what this load is on my heart,
But in these alleys I have loved so long,
Filled from old years with retrospect and song,

I wander aimless, ready to depart,
Prepared to welcome, with no frightened start,
The fatal spectre and the shrouded throng.

"Nature hath spent at last her shining store,
And I have lived my day," the painter said,
Who felt the arrowy throe, the dizzied head,
And laid his palette down for evermore.

Well had he learned the melancholy lore
That trains the rose, without a murmur made,
To break the clusters of her royal red,
And strew her beauty on the windy shore.

Some warning, surely, must I read to-night,
In flower and tree, in flying light and cloud ;
It is the voice of Death, not near, nor loud,

But whispering from some cypress out of sight,
That bids me hearken for the feathery flight,
And draw my robes across my shoulders bowed.

A Parallel

To R. R.

O'ER many a wish frustrated, purpose foiled,
Still dost thou weep, discouraged Soul of Man ?
Be comforted, since even Nature can
Too rarely triumph fully where she toiled ;

Behold the tree, the flower, the cloud despoiled
Of beauty, which was virtue in her plan ;
A thousand times her purposes out-ran
Their issues, maimed and crippled, bent and soiled.

If many evenings close in faintest gray
Before one glorious sunset crowns the day,
If, for one oak, a myriad acorns rot,

If Nature fails a thousand times ere one
Clear master-stroke of beauty fronts the sun,
Man's frequent frailty may deject him not.

Social Revolution

To A. C. B.

HEROIC counsel shook our hearts to-day,
Where new-mown grass perfumed your hedgerow-dell ;
Blue lights across your mangold-wurzel fell,
And Ely shone, a phantom far away.

We spoke of coming claims for social sway,
Of rising horde and shattered citadel,
And one thought all things surely must be well,
And one had little faith, and murmured " Nay ! "

Then, in the primrose sunset of July,
Homeward along the Hinton fields we came,
And each to other questioning made reply

That man and God and nation were the same,
When fen-pools mirrored that far minster-flame,—
And would be, while men toil beneath the sky.

Labour and Love

To M. B.

LABOUR and love ! there are no other laws
 To rule the liberal action of that soul
 Which faith hath set beneath thy brief control,
Or lull the empty fear that racks and gnaws ;

Labour ! then, like a rising moon, the cause
 Of life shall light thine hour from pole to pole ;
 Thou shalt taste health of purpose, and the roll
Of simple joys unwind without a pause.

Love ! and thy heart shall cease to question why
 Its beating pulse was set to rock and rave ;
 Find but another heart this side the grave

To soothe and cling to,—thou hast life's reply.
Labour and love ! then fade without a sigh,
 Submerged beneath the inexorable wave.

Songs of Roses

Rose Fantasia

ROSE, that flushing hues did'st borrow
 From my lute,
Pink for joy and pale for sorrow,—
 Now 'tis mute,
Droop thine amber lids, and sleep
In a tide of perfume deep,
Till the sap of music creep
 To thy root.

Dream ; then die the death of roses
 With no pain,
Till the yellowing wreck uncloses
 In the rain,
And the ghost of music springs
On its dim gray moth-like wings
To my lute's neglected strings
 Once again.

The Missive

I THAT tumble at your feet
 Am a rose ;
Nothing dewier or more sweet
 Buds or blows.
He that plucked me, he that threw me
Breathed in fire his whole soul through me.

How the cold air is infused
 With the scent !
See, this satin leaf is bruised,—
 Bruised and bent.
Lift me, lift the wounded blossom,
Soothe it at your rosier bosom !

Frown not with averted eyes !
 Joy's a flower,
That is born a god, and dies
 In an hour.
Take me, for the summer closes,
And your life is but a rose's.

The Rose of Sorrow

THE royal rose our sovereign bard bewitches ;
Three roses crown his lyre ;
The red is Conquest ; and the yellow, Riches ;
The damask rose, Desire.

But o'er the airs with which his strings are ringing,
One rose hangs out of sight ;
Of the white rose he never dreams of singing,—
For sorrow's rose is white.

The Fallen Rose

LIFE, like an overweighted shaken rose,
Falls, in a cloud of colour, to my feet ;
Its petals strew my first November snows,
Too soon, too fleet !

'Twas my own breath had blown the leaves apart,
My own hot eyelids stirred them where they lay ;
It was the tumult of my own bright heart
Broke them away.

Commemorations and Inscriptions

The Vanishing Boat

H. S.

HE is dying,—

He is dying in England in the clammy heat,
And, in the quiet room where he is lying,
The coverlet is white from head to feet,
Like this white fjord beneath this milky sky.

I sit, and almost see him die.

Here where the tender evening breeze is sighing
Along the beech-wood coverts, sigh on sigh,
Where all the lingering airs are cool and sweet
With woodruff and the soft, crush'd juniper,
And scarce a bough can stir,
It is so still here in the fading day ;
And there, in England, miles and miles away,
He is dying.

All messages come slowly
To this pure haunt of sylvan loneliness ;
Perchance even now he hath put off the stress
Of life, and its extremest weariness,
For rest more calm and holy.
I know not if the face I seem to see
Upon the long white visionary bed

Be living still, or hath been sometime dead ;
For it is shrouded wholly,
As by the mist that lifts from off the sea,
As by the wood-smoke drifting in the wood.
I know not if I greet my friend
Still here, but sinking to an end ;
Or gaze across the interlude
Of a cold beginning mystery ;
Or see before me lying stiff and frore
The statue that is he no more.

Howe'er it be, farewell !
Farewell, from shining fjord and pine-clad fell,
From odorous brae and unfamiliar shore,—
Now I shall see that sacred face no more ;
No more from those mild and transfigured eyes
See flash the gracious miracle
Of sympathetic thoughts and sage replies,—
Those eyes that were the store
Of kindness unreproug, keen and wise.
Farewell, farewell !
The darkness gathers round me in the bell
Of cowslip-coloured air ;
And the long coast beyond grows pale and faint.
A little vanishing boat returning thither
Sends silver streamers in her wake,
Altho' her oars scarce break
The lucent mirror of the lake.
She passes into silence and dim light,
She fades into the cowslip-coloured night,—
She passes,—whither ?

I know not. But I know
From me the silent occupant must go ;
Whatever message to this shore he brought,
Whatever comforting of heart's annoy,
Whatever cargo of clear thought,
Whatever freight of hope and joy,—
His hour is over and his mission done.
Thanks for the long day's happy work he wrought,
Thanks for his cheerful toil beneath the sun,
Thanks for the victories he won.
Now, late at evening, with a silver thread
Of loving memories in his wake, he goes.
Perchance the distance brings him what he sought,
Perchance the further shore, where he is fled,
Is mirage to the dead.
Who knows, who knows?

To all at length an end !
All sailors to some unseen harbour float.
Farewell, mysterious, happy, twilight boat.
Farewell, my friend !

MUNKEBJERG, JUTLAND,
August 1900.

Aubrey de Vere

1814-1902.

In the far romantic morning, when the bards in golden
 Ringed with dew and light and music, struck their giant
 Came a child and stood beside them, gazed adoring in
 Hushed his little heart in worship of a race so calm and

They are gone, those gods and giants, caught Elijah-like to
glory,
Now their triumphs and their sorrows are a part of
England's story ;
Years and years ago they vanished ; but the child who
loved them well,
Still has held the ear of mortals with a far-off tale to tell.

Theirs were voices heard like harps above the congregated
thunder ;
His, a trembling hymn to beauty, or a breath of whispered
wonder ;

When the world's tongue spoke, he faltered ; but above
the turmoil rolled
Fragments of romantic rapture, echoes of the age of gold.

Others stun the years to homage with their novelty and
splendour ;
He was shy and backward-gazing, but his noiseless soul
was tender.
When he sang, the birds sang louder, for his accents, low
and clear,
Never hushed a mourning cushat, never scared a sunning
deer.

Now the last of all who communed with the mighty bards
has perished ;
He is part of that eternity he prophesied and cherished ;
Now the child, the whisperer passes now extremity of age
Shuts the pure memorial volume, turns the long and stain-
less page.

Where some westward-hurrying river to the bright
Atlantic dashes,
In some faint enchanted Celtic woodland hide this poet's
ashes,
That the souls of those old singers whom the clans of song
hold dear,
Nightly may return to hover o'er the grave of their
De Vere.

For a Tomb at Canterbury

E. W. B., October 11, 1896

No pain that mars the trembling brow,
 No flutterings of the soul were his ;
Death, shaken softly from its bough,
 Dropt downward, and its touch a kiss.

Clasped in a cloud of secret prayer,
 Faint, from the upland path he trod,
Sighing, he sank through veils of air,—
 Then round him felt the Arms of God.

Dirge

John Ruskin, January 1900.

MOURN, upward-stealing vapours, sunset-amber,
Cirrus and cumulus of fire and snow !
No more against the labouring west-wind clamber, '
But pour your tears upon the mead below,
Since he who shepherded your cohort slow,
Who named and loved and watched you, one by one,
Goes darkly down to that immortal chamber,
Whence he shall never see you blot the sun,
Nor chase and toss the dancing stars on high,
Nor weave your tender woof, when day is done,
Over the silken sky.

Mourn, mourn, ye Alps, whose crystal paradises
Know neither space nor time, save when and where
The avalanche from desperate precipices
Tolls a rude thundering hour through shuddering air,
He who amongst you walked, and named you fair,
And traced each delicate hornèd crest with joy,
And justified your savage sacrifices,
Him shall no more your azure glens decoy ;
Far from your silver light, your starry gust,
Him to eternal stillness tears convoy,
To silence and to dust.

Madrigal on the Birthday of Queen Victoria

LADY on the silver throne,
 Like the moon thou art to me,
Something bright, august and lone,
 Infinite in majesty.
How can I, a pilgrim, sing
Such a dazzling, distant thing ?

But the Moon came down to earth,
 Wiping tears from human eyes ;
Thou dost bend to grief and mirth,
 Woman in thy smiles and sighs ;
Empress, take the human praise
That a subject dares not raise.

To Henrik Ibsen on entering his
Seventy-fifth Year, March 20, 1902

RED Star, that on the forehead of the North
Hast flared so high and with so fierce a blaze,
Thy long vermilion light still issues forth
Through night of fir-woods down the water-ways,
In urgent wrath of sinister wild rays ;
Lower it falls, and nearer to the sea,—
But still the dark horizon flames with thee.

All stars and suns roll their predestined course,
Invade the zenith, poise, then downward turn ;
Thrust onward by some godlike secret force,
They sparkle, flush, and, e'er they fade, they burn,
Each quenched at last in its historic urn ;
Each sloping to its cold material grave ;
Yet each remembered by the light it gave.

Thy radiance, angry Star, shall fill the sky,
When all thy mortal being hath decayed ;
Thine is a splendour never doomed to die,
Long clouded by man's vapours, long delayed,
But risen at last above all envious shade :

Amid the pearly throng of lyric stars,
Thy fighting orb has stormed the sky like Mars.

And when the slow revolving years have driven
 All softer fire below the western wave,
Though strange new planets crowd our startled heaven,
 The soul will still bear on its architrave
 The light, reflected, that thy lustre gave.
Hail, burning Star ! A dazzled Magian, I
Kneel to thy red refulgence till I die.

Inscription for a certain Glade in the Isle of Wight

HERE the earliest whitethroat sings,
Fern-owls weave their noiseless rings,
Here the light is always pure,
And the fragrant hours endure ;
Here the wind-flowers waken soon,
Here the month is always June,—
For a foot was here at night,
And an eye that swam in light,
When the fitful moonbeam shone
On the tears of Tennyson.

Verses of Occasion

*“Gelegenheitsgedichte—die erste und
ächteste aller Dichtarten.”*

GOETHE: *Dichtung und Wahrheit*



An Episode in Mountain Manœuvres

FAR down the glacier-streams, by pathways made for
mules,
The mountain-troops have come, and crowd our café-stools,
Their elbows brush the board, and in the evening breeze
Their long moustaches wave, their hands rest on their knees.
Weary and soiled they come, from marching, days on days,
Up torrents choked with thorns, down rattling pebbly ways ;
Patient and brown they sit, blue-clad, with white-webb'd
feet,
Like carrier-pigeons perched, half-dozing in the heat,
They seem to bear the hue of gentians in their eyes.

The old gray town has scarce awaked from its surprise
At this pacific inroad from the virgin-snows.
Scented and deep the twilight wind that gently blows
From vines engendering slow the tender wine begun ;
From beds of matted thyme and mint-weed hot i' the sun ;
From vaguely perfumed places rising far to south.

The children lounge from school, with peaches at their
And watch the soldiers playing tric-trac in the shade,
Or march with mimic drum and clarion un-afraid,

Until real warriors seize some straggler from the ranks,
And break in shrieks of mirth that insolent phalanx.

Mounting the meadow-side, we start by slow degrees
To gather crocus-buds beneath the walnut-trees ;
To watch within the disks of broad rough thistle-flowers
The tipsy velvet bees that suck for hours and hours,
And flounder home at last by mere blind instinct led ;—
To hear the gushing spring half-strangled in its bed,
A briar around its brows, thick purslains at its throat,
Its limbs enmeshed in weeds that rather drag than float ;
To taste the savorous hour that ushers in the dark.

When lo ! returning back, the town is still and stark.
Silence is everywhere ! The troops have taken flight !
The tired battalion gone to face a mountain night !

On some high upland crest their bivouack is spread,
And nearer much to heaven than ours their wholesome
bed ;
Their eyes will open next where all the gentians are,
Close under Hesperus, their sentinel, their star.

ALLEVARD, 1903

Poems written in Norway in 1899

I. The Peninsula

THE lilac ling my bed, I lay
In that entranced half-isle of ours,—
That Sirmio of a northern bay,
Paven with tiny leaves and flowers ;—
Ancestral birches down the blue
Their waterfalls of silver threw.

Between their gnarl'd and papery boughs
The radiant lake burned in the sun ;
I looked out of their fairy house,
And watched the waves break one by one—
Reverberant turquoise shattered there
Between green earth and golden air.

Hot in the breeze, the distant pines
Cast wafts of spice across our shore ;
And unseen rosemaries gave signs,
And secret junipers their store ;
From every flower and herb and tree
Sabæan odours sighed to me.

And all things sang, too,—the soft wind,
The birch-leaves' petulant, shy sound,
The lapping waters, and the thinned
Sleek tufts of autumn leafage browned,
The cow-bell far away, that fills
All corners of the folded hills.

Thus odour, song, and colour wrought
A magic raiment for my soul :
All the dark garments pain had brought
To robe me for the masque of dole
Fell from me straightway ; I was clad
As angels when God makes them glad.

Blue, golden-green, and silver-white—
Were these not hues for happiness ?
In our elysian island bright,
Round the worn pilgrim still they press ;
They dress him for the world anew,
These spirits of white and green and blue.

And so for hours I laid my head
Upon the lilac spires of ling,
And thus, by Beauty islanded,
I heard the lustral waters sing,
And watched the low wind stir the gold
And turn the quavering birch-leaves cold.

NÆSET I BYGLAND,
August 4.

II. The Cataract

FROM slippery slab to slab I crawl
Above the shattering waterfall.

A mist, like hopeless human prayer,
Curls in the firs and welters there.

Through them I watch descend, descend
The shuddering waters without end.

Gray tears have fallen to swell this flood,
And iron-ruddy drops like blood.

It moans, and sobs, and howls, and sings,
And whispers of heart-breaking things.

For ages it has thundered so
Into the slate-blue lake below.

Each streak of blood, each cold gray tear,
Sinks down into the sullen mere.

Sinks down, and vanishes, and dies,
Yet the lake's borders never rise.

So to God's silent heart are hurled
The sorrows of the unsuccoured world.

TINNFOSEN,
August 19.

III. The Lake

NEVERMORE sail or oar
Hears the chorus that once bore us
 To the shore,
Where the birches shake their tresses
From the outmost sandy nesses.

Fare ye well, brae and dell,
And our meadow, deep in shadow !
 Never tell
How we loved your pleasant reaches
And the shade of your sleek beeches.

Hours and hours, sun and showers,
Quiet-breasted, here we rested
 By your flowers.
Flowers will fade and life is tragic ;
Keep, sweet lake, your breathless magic.

To your shore nevermore
Come we sailing, blithely hailing,
 As of yore ;
To return would break asunder
All the threads we wove in wonder.

Then, adieu ! not of you
Shall a broken heart be token,
Wavelets blue !
We must steer our barque of sorrow
To some darker shore to-morrow.

BYGLANDSFJORDEN,
August 15.

IV. Verses

Written in the album of Anna Björnaraa, the composer and singer of Stev, where many Norwegian and Danish poets had written.

HERE, where below the bastion of the hills
Immortal song still gushes like a fountain,
And with its delicate enchantment fills
The granite goblet of the hollow mountain,
I come, the pilgrim of an alien clime,
And croon a stave with these my Northland brothers,
Since more than blood-kin is the bond of rhyme,
And sisters were our ancient Muses' mothers.

VIK I VALLE, SÆTERSDALEN,
August 8.

A Song for the New Year

WHAT graven words shall mark as mine
This milestone of a year?

What prayer shall be the worthy sign
Of all I hope and fear?

Not greed for gold—

I'm growing old;

Burdens I dare no more uphold;

Nor deem I meet for weary feet

The dust and struggle of the street.

Then shall I wish for utter peace?

For light with calm around?

For all the stir of life to cease

In apathy profound?

Ah! no, too long

I've warred with wrong;

I've loved the clash of battle-song;

For me, to drone in ease alone

Were heavier than a church-yard stone.

And fame? Alas! it comes too late,

Or, coming, flies too soon;

It dawns, as o'er the meadow-gate,

Peers up the yellow moon;

It glows in power
One feverish hour,
Then passes like a perish'd flower ;
Or sets, to rise in alien skies,
And cheat me of my lawful prize.

Why, then, my New Year's wish shall be
For love, and love alone ;
More hands to hold out joy to me,
More hearts for me to own ;
And if the gain
In part be pain,—
Since time but gives to take again,—
Yet more than gold a thousand-fold
Is love that's neither bought nor sold.

The Cripples' Guild

To M. S.

WHERE no light of summer shone
By the streams of Babylon,
There they sate and wept alone ;

Sobbing in the squalid shade
O'er the ruin life had made,
Sobbing, utterly dismayed ;

Listening to the wind that saith,
Piping with its hollow breath,
“ Who may loose this body of death ? ”

Then within that shrouded sky
Love's clear crystal flashed on high ;
Voices rang, “ Ye shall not die ! ”

Hope, by morning breezes fanned,
Waved the clarion in her hand,
Blew evangel through the land ;

Melted with her smile the snows ;
Clothed the desert with the rose ;
Brimmed the stream that fuller flows ;

Dried the tears that dropped like rain
On pale folded hands in vain ;
Soothed the wild heart's fluttering pain ;

Gave the untended fingers will
For the work that combats ill ;
Proved the useless useful still.

And the life that was so dark
Wins a rapture now, and, hark !
Carols like the soaring lark !

Colour wakens in the grass,
And the river shines like glass,
While the moods of languor pass,

Till the world that sobbed for grief,
Till the thin hours, bald and brief,
Smile in joy beyond belief.

Omariana

I

ONE cup of joy before the banquet ends !
One thought for vanish'd, for transfigur'd friends,
 Stars on the living cope of heaven emboss'd,—
The heaven of love which o'er us beams and bends.

Roses and bay for many a phantom head !
Death is but what we make it—for the dead ;
 Held fast in memory, those we've loved and lost
Shall live while blood is warm and wine is red.

July 1895.

WHILE *Zál* and *Rustum* drew their thunderous line
 Across the rolling veldts that shift and shine,
 Or marching down the long sun-bitten road
 Went wheeling round Rhinocerosfontejn,

We, laagered safe from all our shadowy foes,
 Performed our rites and waved the double rose,
 Feasted in innocently Persian mode,
 And told the Master—what the Master knows.

In peace we drank : yet never might forget
 With what rare wine the wilderness was wet,
 What vintage, pour'd for us, the withering grass
 Held to our glory and eternal debt.

Nor will forget ! Yet are we folk of peace ;
 We long to hear the ringing warfare cease ;
 Then o'er our feast a purpler flush will pass
 When *Zál* comes home with *Rustum* from the seas.

April 1900.

Experiments

I. Choriambics

To the late J. B. L.-W.

WARREN, waken to verse ! chant to us some new song !
Greece, Rome call not in vain, heroes of old, and gods ;
 Egypt, rending her veil, cries
 “ See where laughter has reigned, and tears ! ”

Chant thou, till, in our hearts, veiled by the sands of time,
Sorrow, beauty and love, stirred by the antique shell
 More than mortally stricken,
 Echo, e'en as tho' Pindar sang.

1878.

II. The Bob-Wheel

To the late W. C. M.

A BOB-WHEEL MONKHOUSE bids me try,
Ten rhymes on two, besides the " bob " !
I hesitate, and start, and sigh :
The fear of failure makes me throb.
Can such a breathless bard as I
On these frail pinions heavenward fly ?
Some dædal wizard let me rob !
Courage ! the rhymes are gliding by ;
'Tis almost done ! See, knob by knob,
The bob-wheel turns !
Put something, Cosmo, in my fob,—
His wage the poet earns.

1880.



Paraphrases

The Prologue of Arcturus

Imitated from the "Rudens" of Plautus

BEHOLD' me, of the race that rules the sky !
Not Jupiter a verier God than I ;
A sparkling star, compact of dew and flame,
I roll, and from the Bear I take my name.
High overhead, a god, I blaze all night—
But spend with mortal men the hours of light.
In this I emulate an endless line
Of deities, immortal and divine ;
Since Jove himself paternally decrees
That Gods should wander over lands and seas,
Should put Man's worship to a private test,
And each investigate what each knows best.
Some rogues, litigious without right or cause,
Suborn false witnesses, defy the laws,
Declare themselves in court, devoid of shame,
Brazen ; but back to Heaven we bear each name.
From us the Father learns who weeps for rage,
Powerless to grasp the ravished heritage ;
Who, crushed and shattered by a lying oath,
Curses the lawyer, or the law, or both.
Back to his house he creeps, and little dreams
Of Jove's deep knowledge of these desperate schemes.

But still the guilty wonders, twice or thrice
Earning no boon from costly sacrifice ;
With clamorous hymns and fat of many a bull,
Men call Jove just and wise and bountiful,
With no suspicion that from me he wins
An open knowledge of their secret sins ;
For, taught by us, the Father from the sky
Lest drop no blessing upon perjury.

If ye are humble, poor and weak, but true,
Honour and happiness shall rain on you,
But lies and shameful greed, though loud in prayer,
Shall find no echo in the empty air.
We watch you still ; unseen, in street and mart,
We watch you, and we know you, pure in heart.
Stars all night long, at dawn we fade away,
And put on manhood, and are yours all day ;
But of these god-stars gliding from the sky,
Most wild and most tempestuous star am I ;
Wild am I when I rise, but when I set
More turbulent and more tempestuous yet.

Now listen, for of elfin storms we sing,
Of waves that on the rocks their burdens fling,
Of homes unroofed, of ships that strike and sink,
Of maidens maddening on death's icy brink,
A father to his child restored at last,
And, on the shores of Love, a lover cast.

These things regard ; and with your hands applaud
Invincible Arcturus, foe to fraud.

Cornelia apud Inferos

Paraphrased out of Propertius

CEASE, Paulus, cease to drench my tomb with tears ;
Deaf to your woe the ebon gates of Hell !
When death engulfs our tender mortal years,
Behind a wall of adamant we dwell.
Ev'n if a god could hear your cries and moans,
Deep is the stream, and dark, without a ford ;
Beneath the sky there yet is hope ; but groans
The buried to the living ne'er restored.
The funeral trumpet sealed my fate for aye,
The crawling flame condemned my shrunken dust ;
O what is wedlock, Paulus, what the cry
Of charioteers, the pride of badge or bust ?
For all her fame, her happiness, her race,
Cornelia now lies lighter than a cloud.
O cursèd Night, my marshy resting-place,
O winding waters and my liquid shroud !
Too early, yet all innocent, I come ;
Father of shades, be clement to my shade.
May Æacus, my judge, be mild and dumb,
And due indulgence for my years be made.
O brethren of his dreadful house, be kind !
O hearken for my doom, each griesly Fate !

O pause, Ixion ! Sisyphus, be blind !
O grasp thy river, Tantalus, and wait !
Be merciful, rude Cerberus, to-day,
And drop the rusty links of thy loose chain.
I for myself will plead my cause ; and may
The fell urn overwhelm me, if I plead in vain.

If noble parentage might e'er avail,
My father's names should consecrate my race ;
My mother's ancestry no less prevail ;
Both strains of blood were blazoned in my face.
When from my brows the virgin mantle fell,
My tresses bore the fillet of a bride,
And, for a moment, dear, I pleased thee well ;
My tomb declares I had no love beside.
Ye ancestors, who in your Roman yoke
Dragged Africa in bondage to your knee,
And thou who in the flush of conquest broke
The pride of Perseus, answer then for me.
The censors blamed me not for light attire ;
Never I made your reverend shades to blush.
Cornelia flung no cinders on your fire ;
She added to your flame a nobler flush.
Changeless and innocent, my years out-roll ;
This way or that no fault with me was found ;
My virtues were the mirror of my soul,
And not by custom in a circle bound.
Whatever fate or fame may urge of me,
No matron shrank to seat her at my side,
Not even that rarest maid of Cybele,
Claudia, whom chastity hath deified ;

Nor she, the guardian-priest of Vesta's flame,
Who saw her veil blaze on the living coal ;
And thou, Scribonia, from whose race I came,
Only by dying have I grieved thy soul.

A mother's tears, a country's sorrow, these
Have been my glory ; Cæsar deigns to mourn ;
A sister's daughter in my shade he sees,
And weeps my ashes, tho' a God, forlorn.

Yet have I known love's full beatitude ;
Fate hath not torn me from a barren bed ;
O Lepidus, O Paulus, tender brood,
From your warm arms, I, lingering, turned and fled.

Twice have I seen high on the curule chair
My brother, consul at the hour I died.
Daughter, be worthy of the name you bear ;
Be my ensample at your father's side.
Live as I lived. But, as for me, adieu !
To quit a life so drear, I grow resigned.
The loftiest tribute that is woman's due
Is to be lauded for a virtuous mind.

Dearest, to thee our children I commend ;
Up through the dark this plaintive prayer I fling !
Father, a mother's blessing I shall send,
When round thy neck their little fingers cling.

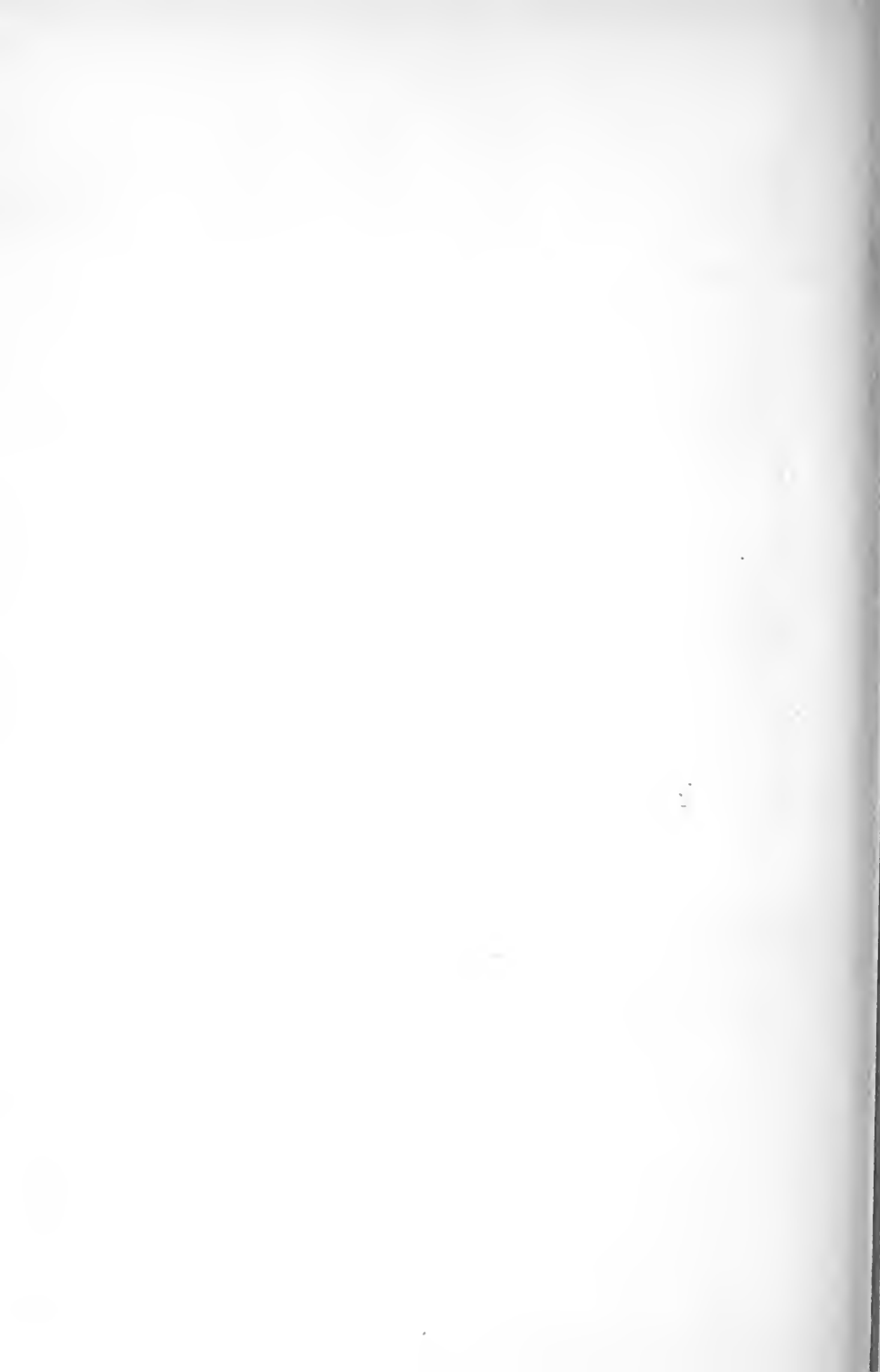
Our kisses on their lips shall be combined ;
But though thy heart be breaking, none the less,
Dry those sad eyes, and let our children find
No salt upon the smiling mouth they press.

Paulus, tired nights are long enough for tears,
And lonely dreams will draw us face to face ;
Then when my breaking voice thy fancy hears,
Speak, speak ! I shall be present in that place.

But ah ! if other nuptials bid rejoice,
If some fresh wife approach with cautious smile,
Children, approve your father's second choice,
And with caresses that new face beguile ;
Nor over-loudly praise your Mother dead,
Lest in such open speech ye seem to blame.
But if long woe circles your Father's head,
And consecrates the memory of my name,
Then from to-day look forward to long years,
Soothed by your love through all their vain despair ;
The gods above, in pity of my tears,
Grant you long life to be your Father's care.
Happy I was in death, and void of fears,
With all my lov'd ones clustered round me there.

My cause is ended. Rise, my weeping friends ;
Bid my pure soul fulfil the gods' behest ;
Heav'n opens for me ; and my shade ascends
To join the solemn cohorts of the blest.

Epilogue in the Autumn Garden



Epilogue

BEFORE my tale of days is told,
O may I watch, on reverent knees,
The unknown Beauty once unfold
The magic of her mysteries !

Before I die, O may I see,
Clasp'd in her violet girdle, Spring ;
May April breezes blow to me
Songs that the youngest poets sing !

Old eyes are dull to sights unseen,
Old ears are dull to songs unsung,
But if the heart stay warm and green,
Perchance the senses may keep young.

Howe'er it be, I will not quail
To tell the lapse of years like sand ;
My faith in beauty shall not fail
Because I fail to understand.

New arts, new raptures, new desires
Will stir the new-born souls of men ;
New fingers smite new-fashioned lyres,—
And O ! may I be listening then.

The centaur crashes thro' the woods,
And shoots his arrow there and thus :
Shall I prefer the solitudes
Because his form be fabulous ?

Shall I reject the green and rose
Of opals, with their shifting flame,
Because the classic diamond glows
With lustre that is still the same ?

Change is the pulse of life on earth,
The artist dies, but Art lives on ;
New rhapsodies are ripe for birth
When every rhapsodist seems gone.

So, if I pray for length of days,
It is not in the barren pride
That looks behind itself, and says
“ The Past alone is deified ! ”

Nay, humbly, shrinkingly, in dread
Of fires too splendid to be borne,—
In expectation lest my head
Be from its Orphic shoulders torn,—

I wait, till, down the eastern sky
Muses, like Maenads in a throng,
Sweep my decayed traditions by,
In startling tones of unknown song.

So, to my days' extremity,
May I, in patience infinite,
Attend the beauty that must be,
And, though it slay me, welcome it









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